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FROM: Guatemala City

TO: Secretary of State

NO: 255, September 8, 6 p.m.

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INTER-AMERICAN AFFAIRS
SEP 9 - 1954
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FADRC FOI CASE NO. 790025 Schlesinger

President Castillo Armas plans in near future to reaffirm his public promise of prompt elections according to reliable Guatemalan official close to him who informed Embassy yesterday that on September 13 President will announce that elections will be held for Constituent Assembly on October 3. He stressed this decision was close held secret and requested Embassy take precautions prevent leaks.

Conversations revealed that some thought had been given to political preparations for elections but that plans were still vague on many details. Roughly plan involves unified action by forces grouped in national anti-Communist front (FAN) in supporting single slate of candidates in each department (province); other non-Communist elements could also present candidates but Castillo's advisers expect opposition votes to be ineffectually spread among numerous local candidates. Voting would be oral to discourage anti-government votes. Embassy's informant had in his pocket tentative lists of candidates for submission to FAN after public announcement had been made and was reasonably certain pro-Castillo forces would win without difficulty. He also said he anticipated no immediate trouble from army but felt it constituted long range danger to Castillo, especially since certain officers were now attempting promote political fortunes of General Miguel y Digoras Fuentes.

When Constituent Assembly met, informant said, it would review acts of government since fall of Arbenz and elect Castillo Armas President for fixed period, possibly four years. Assembly would then adjourn but could be recalled if Castillo proved incapable of governing country and could then elect someone else. Present political statute would remain in force until time was ripe for drawing up new constitution.

Informant believed this scheme offered best prospects for providing government with seal of popular approval and creating public confidence with minimum political disturbance.

In Embassy's view plan has reasonable chance of success although there are many obstacles. Major difficulty lies in conflicting ambitions of political groups composing FAN, their

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their inexperience and lack of effective political organization and impression that campaign is rigged likely to ensue from non-secret balloting and drawing up of "official" list of candidates. On credit side Castillo retains much of his standing as national hero despite disillusionment of certain politicians and there is no known candidate for presidency with sufficient following to have prospect of unseating him by electoral means. Though Castillo's forces have little organization any possible opposition has even less. Restricted agenda proposed for Constituent Assembly limits opportunities for political maneuvering and if Assembly comes off successfully domestic and international prestige of government should be enhanced. Thus, despite its drawbacks, plan seems to offer possible solution to some of government's immediate political problems.

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